

Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me. I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was well, I was found.

*Lady Bracknell* U. Found!

*Jack*. The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

*Lady Bracknell* U. Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

*Jack*. [Gravely.] In a hand-bag.

*Lady Bracknell* U. A hand-bag?

*Jack*. [Very seriously.] Yes, Lady Bracknell, I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

*Lady Bracknell* U. In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

*Jack*. In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

*Lady Bracknell* U. The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

*Jack*. Yes. The Brighton line.

*Lady Bracknell* U. The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

*Jack*. May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

*Lady Bracknell* U. I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

*Jack*. Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that.